



Paul McMinn, Robert Goodrich, and Robert Heiderman

Oral History Transcription

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Summary: Paul McMinn was in his twenties and just out of college when he was hired to serve as Director of the Engman Public Natatorium. This was in 1978, and at the time, he and most others did not know that 1978 would be the Natatorium's last season. Robert Goodrich was then Director of Recreation for South Bend Parks having served in that role since 1965. Robert Heiderman taught swimming, CPR, and other services at South Bend pools—including the Natatorium. Together, the three reflect on the Natatorium's final years, the decision to shut it down, and role the Natatorium and other facilities played in the life of South Bend residents.

0:00:00 [George Garner] My name is George Garner, and I serve as the Curator here at the Indiana University South Bend Civil Rights Heritage Center. And today is April 11, 2018. And I'm here with three gentlemen, each of whom has different responsibilities for what was the Engman Public Natatorium. Immediately to my left, can you just state your name please?

[Paul McMinn] Paul McMinn.

[Bob Heiderman] Bob Heiderman.

[Bob Goodrich] Bob Goodrich.

0:00:25 [GG] Gentlemen, thank you so much for being here. Little bit about each of your backgrounds first. I just want to start about where you were born and raised? Are you all from South Bend? I'll start with you, Paul.

[PM] Yes, I'm from South Bend, and actually, I'm from the Westside. Went to Holy Cross and went to LaSalle. So, this isn't far from the neighborhood I grew up in.

[GG] Where on the west side? What streets?

[PM] Meade Street. Right by LaSalle.

[GG] Yeah.

0:00:50 [BH] I'm Bob Heiderman. I was born and raised in Chicago and Park Ridge Illinois. And went to Notre Dame High School there, and Notre Dame High School brought me down here to South Bend. That's when I got into aquatics, because I like swimming. I got into the aquatic program in the fall, and Bob Goodrich...

0:01:13 [BG] I'm Bob Goodrich. I moved around a little bit. I was born Nebraska, ended up in Kansas City. Ended up at Indiana University. Air Force. Evansville. Indianapolis. And now South Bend. So, we moved around a great deal.

I came to South Bend in 1965 from Indianapolis. Was the Assistant Director of Recreation, Recreation Director here for about ten years, and became Director for about ten years. The Natatorium, of course, was one of our responsibilities at that time.

0:02:02 [GG] Yeah, that actually leads to my next question, which is how you got your start at South Bend Parks and Recreation. Mr. Goodrich, you shared yours after coming here in 1965. Paul, when did you get your start with Parks and Rec?

[PM] Actually, this is the job that I was hired—was be the director of this. So, after graduating from IU down in Bloomington, this is my first full-time job. And I've been with the department for the next forty-one years and working on my fifth decade now!

[laughs]

[GG] That's amazing.

0:02:29 [BG] Something interesting around Paul. We hired him, putting him in the Natatorium as the Director and six months later, we closed the Natatorium. Then, we hired him to our office later on and ten years later, they closed our office. So, Paul is just kind of been a loser.

[laughs]

Isn't that right Paul?

0:03:04 [PM] See, but what Mr. Goodrich isn't telling you is that he also... One of the neat things in our community is the East Race waterway. While one door opens...

One time when I was a young person, Mr. Goodrich said, "By the way, Paul, we knew it was coming, but you're the aquatics guy, you're going to be in charge of that."

Imagine. Six million dollar, the city, the department. Woah! Woah! Woah!

[laughs] I don't know anything about... "Oh, you'll learn."

Two years of not sleeping nights, and now we put down 400,000 people, started the river rescue school, so... So, he's only telling you the doors that closed, he's not also telling you the doors that opened. Especially one big one that [inaudible].

[GG] That's a long and distinguished career, though. I mean, that's a lot of stuff here in our city for almost five decades, working with various places.

0:04:01 What about you, sir?

[BH] I started lifeguarding in Chicago on the beach, [inaudible] beach. I was at the Park Ridge pool, and I sailed. I like water. So, when I came down here after two years of being out in [inaudible] and Notre Dame, and after two years there I got involved with Denny Stark [spelling?], and Denny [Dennis] Stark got me down in the Parks Department.¹

0:04:27 [GG] Who's Denny Stark?

[BH] Denny Stark was a swim coach at Notre Dame. And he was running lifeguarding classes. So, then I got in... came down to see Mr. Goodrich, and Paul, and... I started before you did?

[PM] Oh yeah, you're a lot older than I am.

[BG] Well Bob, you were involved with the Red Cross too and other areas besides just swimming.

[BH] Besides swimming I do ski patrol, [inaudible] had a run like we had at Notre Dame. Holy Half marathon, we ran first aid program... Sunburst. When Red Cross used to be really strong, first aid and that, I used to teach first aid at national aquatics camp. Got involved with canoeing, and that's what that article over there is...

[GG] You're referencing an article you gave me from... I can't see what year. I'm guessing 1960s?

[BH] We did canoeing here. Canoeing classes. Wherever there was a boat or a canoe or something like that I was always involved.

0:05:46 [GG] What year did you get your start here?

[BH] I think it was in '64. [inaudible] We had another brother, brother Louis Hersheg [spelling?] He used to teach up in here too, but he passed away a year ago.

[PM] Bob, when you taught the class, wasn't it an Adams phys ed class? And then you went out to Pinhook when you were done?

[BH] Well, we had two programs going on. I had the Girl Scout group here and the adult canoeing program going here. Then we had, at Adams High

¹ Dennis Stark was the founder of the University of Notre Dame's men's swimming program, serving as swimming and diving coach from 1958 through his retirement in 1985. <https://news.nd.edu/news/dennis-stark/>

School, Shirley Miller got involved and she said we want to have a canoeing class here [for] the kids. So, we started at 7 o'clock in the morning, went to 8:30. And there was a period where [inaudible] they went back to the school, so we did some stuff here and then we went out to Pinhook. The Girl Scouts and the adult canoeing classes, we went down to Maxinkuckee and paddled on the lake down there, and we'd paddle on the Elkhart River. Basically, started here with the canoeing program.

0:06:55 [GG] So, Paul, when you started here, you started here as the Director in 1978, basically. How old were you?

[PM] Just out of college... Twenty-one, twenty-two?

[GG] Not a bad job for right out of college, being director of a...

[PM] Yeah, for me, you know, when you go to college you think you're going to be some gigantic, big job. So, for me at the time... and I worked on Lake Michigan, I worked at Warren Dunes for... at the beach at Warren Dunes State Park. And then I worked at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore where they recruited me to be in charge of that beach. So, to come, you know... basically to lifeguard. There wasn't...

0:07:37 So, it was actually at the time when I even interviewed, I said, "Well, can I think about it?" It wasn't... to go... just to be a regular lifeguard. Your mind, you wanted something bigger. I remember going home and telling my mom, "Well, I'm not sure I want to do that." And she goes, "Are you out of your mind!" [laughs] She goes, "You're a kid though too." "I'm better than that," and she goes, "Are you crazy? Doesn't mean you're going to be there the rest of your life." And she was right. It goes to show that when you're a kid, you know, you don't always think things clearly. She goes, "You get on the phone right now and say, 'Thank you very much for that job! I'd love to work there!'" [laughs]

Anyway, long story short, Mom was right...

[GG] Mom is always right.

0:08:20 [PM] But, I would like to share with you the first time I came into the building was when I was in high school. I was taking my lifeguarding class, and actually the center director at the time got into an accident. He was hit by a car, and he died in front of WSBT. And so, all of a sudden...

[GG] This is when WSBT was downtown.

[PM] Correct.

[GG] At the corner of Lafayette and Jefferson.

[BG] Let me clarify that. His name was Jim Macnamara [spelling?], and we'd just hired him a few weeks before. Instead of driving his car he rode his bicycle back and forth to work, and he hit the curb downtown. I think it was on Main Street, or... I think it was Main Street. And fell off, and he didn't have a helmet, hit on his head, and died right there on the spot.

[PM] So, my first thing was... meeting Bob was after that happened, Bob came in half way through the classes to take his place.

[GG] And let's use, instead of just Bob...

[PM] Bob Heiderman.

[GG] Thank you.

[PM] So that was my first time meeting Bob, little did I know that I'd go on to end up being his boss a thousand years later. And he's still working...!

0:09:47 [GG] I'm really interested in, and I think Paul, you might be able to answer this best, day-to-day operations. What is it like to run this pool?

[PM] Well, and Mr. Goodrich... There wasn't a million things going on. So, but, it was still nice. So, for instance—I forget if we open at 12 or 1—the first hour was lap swimming. And so, you had your regulars and you knew them by their first name, and they'd come in and swim.

[BG] But not many.

[PM] No, not many.

[BG] Two, three, four people were a good day... or a good lap swim.

0:10:24 [PM] And then followed by that, when the schools got out, then we had open swimming. No, I take that back. We had open swim for a little while, and then we closed for that swim team. The Marlins swim club was here. That would be kind of like a supper break for me then during that time that the Marlins were here, and then I'd come back and it would be open at night from 7 to 9, or something like that. 6-8. Night session. And the nights were sometimes really packed with a lot of people.

It was a nice place to work. There were a lot of people in the community, you know...

0:11:09 I think now sometimes when you think about the Natatorium, the only thing you hear about is, maybe, the discrimination and other things earlier... Well, I never saw it. There was nothing like that. There were people from the community that came, people enjoying the pool. So, I think that needs to be said too. That's the past, but when, if you were in the '70s, you wouldn't have noticed anything like that. That was gone.

0:11:35 [GG] We'll get into that. Just briefly, my understanding is fairly shortly after the '50s—particularly for people who weren't directly affected, particularly for white people—that history of discrimination became... it wasn't something that they were confronted with, and so therefore, they didn't know. And by the '70s that was true...

I've heard even from people of color... This gentleman who used to work here, who grew up here in the '70s, who was a kid—a teenager, and he's like, "I had no idea what had happened in the 1940s, or the 1950s."

I think by the '70s... That's not to say that everybody forgot it, of course. But there was a huge swath that had.

[PM] But a new generation [inaudible]

0:12:20 [BG] George, are you aware that back in the days you're talking about...

[GG] Which days, the 1970s?

[BG] '40s, '50s.

[GG] During segregation era.

[BG] The blacks were not allowed in the pool. Are you aware of that story? They would, one day a week they would drain the pool?

[GG] Please clarify that, because we've heard... Okay, so we've heard a lot of things. We've heard stories that the pool had been drained. We've also heard that, in order to drain the pool, it takes upwards of three to four days, and about three to four to refill, to get the chemical balance right... So, the idea that you'd be able to drain and then refill can't possibly happen. That's the story that we tell.

0:13:06 [BG] I'd say you're partially right. It doesn't take three or four days to drain it. Probably takes a day and a half, and a day and a half to refill it.

[BH] But still. But then you got with your chemicals...

[PM] ...and then normally though, you even have to, before you can open it, have to test the water and have them approve it.

[BG] So to clarify that story, I wasn't here then either. So, I'm hearing the same thing you are. That was a story that has always been told on the black side, the use of the Natatorium. That one, they were denied the use in a segregated... It was a very segregated use that they had. Now whether it's... whether they drained the pool or refilled it, I have no idea. But that's what I was told.

0:14:06 [GG] So, that's a really good point. So, we know that the pool was segregated by day from 1936 to 1950. That day changed over time, and the specifics about exactly what and when we don't know, but mostly it was Mondays where it was people of color that were allowed and then other days people of color were not allowed. Sometimes that day changed to once a month... that kind of became a bit of a change.

The draining the pool is told in a lot of the oral histories, but it's always told as, "I remember." Not as, "I was there and I saw it." And so, when we hear... So, basically, a day and a half to fill, day and a half to...

0:14:54 [PM] At a minimum, because we don't know how much flow of water could come in, [inaudible] the pipes were, so a minimum of three days. If the pipe... Could be five or six.

[BG] Takes two or three days just to get the chemicals right. You have to heat it.

[PM] So that story doesn't make any sense physically.

[GG] Well, what does make sense though is, when you think of who that story serves to hurt and whom it helps. If you hear that story, that's yet another reason why you feel like you don't belong. You're told you don't belong on some days, and now here's another way that you don't. That becomes the myth. That becomes the rumor, and that serves to reinforce that feeling that you're not welcome. And that's the way that we tell it now. The story was out there, and people understood it and believe it, and I still hear it every now and then...

[PM] And perception becomes reality.

[GG] But, we work to understand where that line is. That yes, the perception was there, but it's hard for us to figure out how... the reality of that happening, at least in terms of draining. In terms of not being allowed in, that's different. In terms of being told that you're... you don't belong here, that's different. That's absolutely true.

0:16:10 Um... Paul, where was your office?

[PM] I didn't really have an office. [laughs] The building... Let's see, there's a men's locker room, a woman's locker room, my office is probably on the wall watching the... 'cause you were lifeguarding. Because most of the time you were watching pool.

[BG] There was a little area. You had a desk, and you had a chair.

[PM] You know what, I don't even remember having... Maybe because I was working all the time, boss!

[laughs]

0:16:55 [GG] So Paul, when you were here, the pool was fifty years old. Was the equipment fifty years old too?

[PM] Oh yeah. The whole place, even my little term of six months... You could look up at the ceiling and... We had repairmen coming all the time, you can see... It basically was on its last legs, and band-aids... the cost of just trying to keep it up, at some point... It's an old car, you gotta keep trying to fix it up so the structure, the chemicals, the water, the thing—even the structure of the building, the ceilings, and everything started to fall in.

Then really, towards the very end, I started in January and by May or June it got even a lot worse. Everything more or less blew up, and then... Well, Mr. Goodrich can tell you the political decisions. All I knew was, do I have a job all day? [laughs] The pool just fell apart!

0:18:05 [BG] I don't remember it being a political decision. It was more—what do you have to do? Ceiling was leaking, tile was coming off. The building was old. The South Bend Community School Corporation built five swimming pools, which was really the demise of any facility like this.

[GG] You also had the new YMCA along...

[BG] You had the "Y." It was just... economic decision I guess, I would say. Attendance was poor.

0:18:49 [BH] It was a twenty-yard pool—same as Central had a twenty-yard pool—where you had to swim five laps to do your hundred.

[GG] Now, my understanding though, in 1922 that made it the largest indoor swimming pool in the state. Now, my guess is...

[BG] I never heard that.

[GG] My guess is, it did not hold that title for long.

[laughs]

But this was built in an era of cities starting to build swimming pools from late 19th into the early 20th centuries. Cities after cities are starting to build municipal swimming pools as a way to offer... I mean, just the idea of the city offering recreation to their citizens is a reasonably new concept at that time. So, this was the first, and therefore, by the time you guys took over by definition the oldest.

0:19:38 I'm also led to understand that, in 1922, this had one of the early applications of an ultraviolet cleaning system, or filtration system. Do you remember that at all?

[PM] I do remember hearing that said, so at the time it was state-of-the-art.

[BH] Didn't they have a sand filter when you were here?

[PM] I think they did...

[GG] Did you say sand filter? S-A-N-D? What's a sand filter?

[BH] Water moves through the sand and cleans it...

[PM] I do remember hearing them bragging quite about that at the time.

0:20:16 [GG] How much does it cost to come in in 1978?

[PM] I don't even remember. I can tell you at the same time that we're doing... 'Cause I was also, in the summer, in charge of the outdoor pools like Kennedy and Potawatomi, and...

[BG] And Pinhook.

[PM] And Pinhook. And Pinhook was free, but at the pool we might've been charging 20-cents, or 50-cents.

[BG] 15- or 20-cents seems like what we charged here for kids, and it might have been a quarter for adults. But we also had a season pass that you could buy, which was really... I don't know, might have been \$5? \$10 at the most for the year? It certainly was not a money maker.

[GG] I was gonna say, I know inflation makes a difference, but still—a quarter, \$5 is not that much.

0:21:13 And that's actually... That leads into my next question about the economics. I want to know what it was like to, kind of, just be in charge—and that's why, Mr. Goodrich, this is perfect for you. You have to work... You're part of the budget making process of balancing a lot of different facilities throughout the city. You said attendance is low, and attendance maybe brought in 20- to 25-cents a pop, so tickets sales were not enough to make this place a money maker. Now, is that true?

[BG] No.

[GG] This was a drain on the budget rather than... This drained the city's budget. Is that correct?

[BG] Yeah. I don't know if I'd use the word "drained."

[GG] Pun intended. [laughs]

0:21:59 [PM] But Mr. Goodrich, wouldn't you say that... Because I was fortunate to have him as my boss, and so we went through the different eras, and he started, obviously, long before. People didn't look on it as a... They looked at it as it's a public service... And when I first started, we still looked at it like that. You didn't have to make money. We started the east race, we charged a dollar. So, there wasn't that pressure on you... it was considered a city service no different than having a police or fireman, to have a pool.

- 0:22:34 [BG] That was basically the philosophy of the department, and I think the City as a whole, the Council that offered budgets. Within the last ten years, maybe, fifteen years at the most, that feeling has changed. At one time it was, people would say, we pay taxes, we deserve this. We want it, and therefore it was given to them. But as budget constraints became stronger, people looked at money and income, the philosophy just changed here. Didn't change in the Department, but it changed downtown.
- 0:23:28 [PM] Even interesting, the Park Department... I went to Holy Cross school, we would take our skates because they had a person in the park in the winter that would put the water on the tennis courts, and they would have a fire... But in order to do that, we... If you look at the maintenance thing alone of the department, there's like thirty-six people just to do... The number of full-time employees was amazing. It was a different time, and a different era.
- 0:24:03 [BG] It was a good time. [inaudible] The rote cost of being, coming to the Nat... At the golf course we charged \$3 for a round of golf. Now it's \$25. Just the times are changed. I don't know whether it's inflation? I don't want to get into all that. I just think that people don't want to pay any more than they have to anymore. And it used to be, they're willing to give you anything you wanted. But times certainly are different. The dollar's not worth what it was then.
- 0:25:01 [GG] And yet, part of the economic equation was the fact that this pool, by this time, by 1978, was over fifty years old. Had cracks in the ceiling, had fifty-year-old equipment, was incredibly small. So, I'm wondering how the conversations about closing it started and came to be? Do you remember where you first were when you first heard about people closing it?
- [BG] It would have been let to the Park board. When I came in in '65 and they didn't close it until '78, they were talking at that time—I don't think very seriously, but they were talking about and looking at the Natatorium. Is this something that we can continue to sustain, or should we be thinking about closing it, or selling it, or whatever?
- 0:26:02 And then the selling of it became an issue. I think there were a couple of offers made, I'm not really sure on that except the family that donated this originally...
- [GG] The Engman's.

[BG] Yes. Had in the agreement that it had to be a swimming pool, and it had to be maintained by the Park Department. So, that put a stoppage on any thinking of those terms. And I think, once they got that determination, [inaudible] they were stuck with it, I think then they seriously began to look at it and say, we're going to close it. 'Cause we just can't afford to put the money into it that it would take... It would be rebuilding the whole thing, and they weren't interested in doing it.

0:27:02 [GG] So if I understand you correctly, this is as early as the '60s, 1965, people are starting to think about what they can do with this place?

[BG] I would say in '60.

[PM] The '60s were also a great time for our department because we were getting Rum Village Nature [Center], we were getting more buildings... That was a tremendous growth of our department.

[GG] And possibly, I'm just guessing here, but maybe one of the reasons they were looking at this place too because, at that point, 1960, it would be about a forty-year old building as opposed to a brand-new building.

[BG] Right.

[BH] At that time, all the schools—LaSalle, Jackson—they all had pools.

[BG] And we used them.

[PM] We used to do Learn to Swim at...

[BG] We used them every... at nights and on weekends...

[BH] Because wasn't the Parks Department and the school program together?

[BG] Well, that's another story, and I don't how much you want to go into this, but... Try to make it real brief.

0:28:03 When I came here, the Recreation Department and the Park[s] Department were separate entities. We were not together. However, the Recreation Department got half of its budget from the school, half of it from the civil city through the Park Department. Which, in essence, tied the two departments together but they operated independently.

So, at the time, when they built the pools, we were in the schools every night with adult programs during the week, at children's programs on weekends, and the pools, swim lessons, family swims, and all that.

0:28:55 I'm not sure, Paul you can probably tell it better—I think 1993 the schools determined that they no longer—because of budget problems—could afford to support the recreation. So, the city took over the Recreation Department and combined it with the Park Department.

[PM] That's right. It was 1995, 'cause I remember I was a school corporation employee too and I was worried whether I was going to have a job or not.

[BG] And I retired in '91, so I wasn't there.

0:29:33 [PM] It wasn't... I think, when you look at the equation, as we keep saying, now we have five pools. And now we're actually school corporation employees—some of our department. So now we can do family swim, we can do aerobics, we can do lifeguarding—and now we can do it in five different locations.

[BG] And we were filled.

[BH] People waited in line on a Saturday morning to sign up their kids for Learn to Swim.

[BG] It was unreal. And you know what we charged? \$3 for ten lessons. Remember that, Bob?

[GG] Can't get that anymore.

[laughs]

Like you said, this is an era when that was seen as a service, so that money was just a little bit to add to budget.

[BG] Again, going back to that philosophy that people paid their taxes and they deserved it.

0:30:31 [GG] So were there people though who argued in favor of keeping this building open? At any point from the '60s through the '70s?

[BG] I hate to answer that because I'm not sure. I'm not aware of any.

[GG] You don't remember any.

[BG] No, I don't. There was... can't think of what it was across the street. Was a...

[GG] It's the Hansel Center. Children's hospital.

[BG] They wanted it to stay open. And at one time they wanted to use it—I'm not going to say buy it. They were very interested in bringing the kids over and that sort of thing. That may have been one group that showed some interest, but I don't know of any the others...

0:31:27 [PM] I think you have to look at—you mentioned the pools, how that helped for the community. But then at Kennedy and Potawatomi—I think they opened in the '50s—but then we opened up Pinhook too. So, you can also say that... In fact, when Pinhook first opened, there were... They were so busy that there were two different shifts that were there. And so now, from our community standpoint, you can say, well, there's high school pools we can go to, we not only have two swimming pools, but now we have a beach as well.

[GG] When Pinhook opened as a park, my understanding is that it wasn't...

[BH] '67 at Pinhook.

[BG] The swimming... The beach. I don't recall when it closed...

[PM] I do, because I remember the east race started in '84, it was like '88, '89.

[BG] It was only open fifteen years.

[PM] I remember because I was still doing the east race and the pools...

[BG] Remember when we used to have [inaudible] every year?

0:32:39 [GG] So, before your time here, really kind of the first half of the 20th century, when segregation was practiced in this city, if you were African American that meant that you couldn't come here, that you couldn't go downtown, you couldn't go to a lot of places to just get some of those basic services. So west of here became a thriving African American business district. Hotels, little grocery stores...

[BH] Banks.

[GG] Banks. You know, all those things. Integration comes, and it makes it harder for them to thrive and compete. And then add on top of that the closing of Studebaker, and now add on top all these things... and it led to violent uprisings along West Washington in the late 1960s. Washington, Chapin, you see a lot of things happening here, a lot of people crying out, a lot of people suffering. This building is in the middle of all of it.

So, I guess I'm just asking for your insight. What did you see? You're coming in on the tail end, you're coming it right on the middle of the second half of the 20th century.

0:33:51 [PM] But I was in high school at LaSalle. I'll never forget the principal getting on the PA and saying, "All hell's broke loose, everybody go home."

[GG] He said those words?

[PM] "All hell's broke loose, everybody go home." We were having riots everywhere, I mean, the police were outside. The school just erupted. And you're right—it wasn't just there. There'd be cars just down the street here, you'd see that the car was on fire. The whole neighborhood was blowing up.

0:34:26 And then, just being in Parks so long... I know, for instance, a lot of the people were mad at LaSalle Park. That they wanted more than just a little—Mr. Goodrich can tell you more. Still, to this day, that's our park, we fought hard for that park, we want that park. We want the building nicer.

So, you're right... I mean, you couldn't live on this side of town without knowing all of that was going on. You know, the '60s were...

And then you had Martin Luther King, and then you had the Kennedy... All of that going on at the same time. You could look up and see the helicopters flying over your head over to Detroit. [inaudible]

[BG] Those were troubled times. They were very difficult times.

[PM] Not just for us, but for the whole country.

0:35:17 [BH] I worked for the Red Cross at that time. We used to set up in the old fire station—not the one on Sample Street, the one downtown. First Aid, we'd go out, people would get hurt, fights and that. We'd go help them out.

Every night there was always a team go down to the fire department, wait and see what happens [inaudible]. They had a little Studebaker ambulance.

0:35:55 [BG] It's true. It was out of control. I know that we, as a Recreation Department, were tasked by the mayor to [inaudible] programs and do what we could to take some of the tension off.

[GG] This would be probably mayor Allen for you right, at that time? ²

[BG] I think it was Miller, I believe. ³ We opened, for instance, all the swimming pools—but we couldn't control it. They came in and—and by “they” I'm talking about the blacks came in and disrupted the program, wouldn't listen to the guards, got in fights.

0:36:55 I remember this one incident, happened at LaSalle... We open the pool. The guards told everybody they had to take a shower before they could get in. That was a normal rule. That wasn't anything exceptional. And about twenty or twenty-five of the older guys—these are people 25 and 30 years old that were coming to these programs—they went in the shower, and actually, got so much soap on them you could hardly see their bodies. They came in and jumped in the pool. We had to have the pool drained and cleaned.

You know, we try to do things and—I'm not saying that we did it right and they were wrong. It was just difficult to control.

0:38:02 I remember then, at that time, Johnny Dee was a basketball coach at Notre Dame. They had a pretty good team. So, he came to our department and said, “We'd like to do something. What can we do?” And we said, “Well, why don't we—if you can do this legally—get the team together, and they were together anyway out at Notre Dame, and we'll schedule... we'll go around to different parks at night and we'll [inaudible] guys to come in and play against.” We did that one summer. I suppose maybe we had fifteen games, I don't know, during the summer.

0:38:59 I remember one night at LaSalle Park, we had a lighted court. I didn't estimate this, but the police estimated there were close to 10,000 people there watching that basketball game. And we had a group of guys in town who were in their twenties and thirties who had been good basketball players, and they kind of formed their own team, and they got to the point

² Lloyd Allen served as Mayor of South Bend from 1964 to 1972.

³ Jerry Miller served as Mayor of South Bend from 1972 to 1976.

where Notre Dame was playing the same group every night. And they had some tough games. It was outstanding.

But we always had problems because of the crowds. There'd be fights, arguments. It was just very troubling times for us.

0:40:04 [GG] Paul, so when you were here in the middle of that—I think you spoke on this a little bit—people who used this pool, would you say mostly adults? Mostly children?

[PM] Mostly children.

[GG] And were they all from the neighborhood, mostly white, mostly people of color?

[PM] Mostly from the neighborhood, but there were a mix... Especially on Saturdays, you'd never... it'd be a different group sometimes all the time, sometimes it would just be neighborhood kids.

0:40:41 [GG] And I know, like you said, the 1960s was this era of more pools—I'm sorry, more recreational facilities coming. So, you had places like Charles Black Center on the west side, and that was...

[BH] Martin Luther King Center.

[GG] Yeah.

[PM] And I think... That's where—I think that's where I'm thinking Mr. Goodrich can nod in on this too... but that's where I think our department really helped because, in fact, even to [inaudible]. So, we had a staff out there that, you know, in fact, if you go there now—of course Charles Black is under construction—imagine ten busses driving up to it... because those are like the kids' homes. Busses drop them off at the center, they have afterschool programs and, "Did you get your homework done?" I think that's...

0:41:30 Probably four years ago we started the program called MADE—it's a mentoring program to help the kids that are in trouble. They go to the high schools, even to the alternative school. The teachers there say, "Boy, when you come in you can hear a pin drop." They really relate to it. "What are your problems?" And work with them.

And so, the neat thing is I think, that... So, Parks and Recreation, Mr. Goodrich told you how they tried to get together with Notre Dame and try to solve some problems. The neat thing is, I think, long-term, you know... We did [inaudible]. Now we're still adding people to help mentor. It's neat that we have on the staff that's out there trying to work with kids that need help.

0:42:16 [GG] So, did you hear then any criticism from the community or from some of the patrons when this pool closed? Again, there's other options at that point, but...

[PM] I probably was just a young person. I really... Now, I'm Assistant Recreation Director, so now I'm in tune with what's going on at all of our facilities as Mr. Goodrich was. I wasn't in tune at that time, so I didn't...

[GG] Mr. Goodrich, did you hear of some criticism from the community too when they closed this?

[BG] Not really that I recall. It was... very noticeable. There may have been a comment or two. As I recall it might have been a story or two in the paper at that time.

[BH] Also, we moved this into the different schools...

[BG] Well, that wasn't [inaudible]. When the pools opened in the school, there was no need for this. And then, because of its condition... Otherwise, it'd probably still be open if it was [in] good shape.

0:43:22 [GG] Do you remember that last day?

[PM] No. It all merged together. I really, probably... We closed, I think, pretty much on the normal schedule, but barely. So, I guess at the time you're thinking, "Well, I'll be back next..." You know. We knew there was a lot of problems, we knew that there was a possibility that... I guess I didn't think that that was my last time out the door—which it ended up being.

[BG] It did happen pretty quick. The decision was talked about, you expected it, but you didn't know when. And all of a sudden...

0:44:04 [PM] And I think that when we were closed for the season, I think by that time they didn't know how much it's going to cost, how much work does it need. And then even more ceiling fell in. By the time you got all reports and stuff, but when we closed we didn't have all that data yet to know.

[GG] So, the season ended what month?

[PM] Usually in May.

[GG] When does the season start?

[PM] This building was closed in the summertime, because then we have the outdoor facilities. So, it closed some time in May because then we opened up the other ones.

[GG] Gotcha.

0:44:42 Did any of you come back to the building or drive by the building after it?

[BH] Oh yeah.

[PM] Yeah, because Kennedy pool is just down the street.

And actually, my family owns one of the houses—or used to—like five doors down. Sometimes I'd like to go by and look at where I started and see my cousin's house down the street.

[BG] It was always fun to drive by because of the magnificent houses...

0:45:20 [BH] So the pool sat empty how long before you came in?

[GG] So we came... So, we transformed the building in 2010. So almost, or over another thirty years. And that's actually perfect for my next... So, you already spoke about...

0:45:39 During that time that it was closed, you're still involved and Parks and Rec technically still owned the building is my understanding. There were various people who tried to find new uses. Did you guys hear about some of those?

[BG] Yeah. I do.

[GG] Mr. Goodrich.

[BG] There were... I'm trying to think what they were. I remember that... One proposed use was to put a platform over the pool area and make it a boxing center for the youth on west side primarily.

[GG] I had not heard that.

[BG] Open to all people. That was one.

0:46:28 [GG] Was that Parks and Rec that was trying to do that? Or a private?

[BG] A club. You remember that, Bob?

[BH] Yeah. I remember the...

[BG] I can't think of the guy's name... There was one man that was very involved in that.

0:46:48 There was talk about making it a youth center. There wasn't a lot of room in what you could do, but again, they talked about putting a platform over the pool. Maybe setting up a basketball goal, couple pool tables, study table, and that was it. But none of this ever came to fruition. It was just... people had ideas. And there were more, I just don't remember all of them.

0:47:29 [GG] I had heard a story of a gentleman who wanted to buy it and turn it into a private home, and then another one who wanted to turn it into, like, an art gallery.

[BG] The art gallery was another one... Private home I hadn't heard...

[GG] I hadn't heard the boxing ring, yet.

[laughs]

[BG] Well, there was, at that time...

[BH] [inaudible]

[PM] [Brazier], maybe? Harold [Brazier]? ⁴

[BG] There was a professional boxer here in South Bend... can't think of his name. Anyway, he was somewhat involved in the proposal of the boxing... Can't think of his name. He was a national champion at one time.

[BH] I watched him fight at the Century Center.

⁴ It sounds like Mr. McMinn is saying "Frazier," however, I believe he is referring to professional boxer Harold Brazier: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Brazier

0:48:35 [GG] Maybe one last question: Were there ever any accidents here? Any drownings? I've never heard of any.

[PM] No.

[BG] Here?

[GG] Here.

[BG] None that I'm aware. We've had drownings out at Pinhook.

[PM] Before I was there, I want to point out.

[BH] They had drownings at Adams High School.

[PM] But that's not ours.

[BH] We taught at Adams, and we always made sure we have lifeguards. Here, I've never had any real incidents.

0:49:15 [PM] I guess, really, if you go back from the beginning in time, the only thing that I can find in our records was the one drowning at Pinhook.

[BG] Right. Well, we had a couple serious accidents out there. We had... one person injured his spine, became a paraplegic. He dove in three foot of water, and you know...

[BH] We had more drown out at Notre Dame. Four incidents out there. I've never had any problems in any of the schools or any of the programs here in town.

0:50:02 [GG] You gentlemen then stayed with Parks and Recreation for a long time—made long careers out of it—and it's gone through many changes. I wonder if you could just speak briefly about the changes in Parks and Rec since... Especially now that it's become this new thing: [South Bend] Venues, Parks, and Arts.

[PM] I think the neat... It was funny because, I obviously... People say, "Why, Paul, what's your opinion?" They mean old and history, right? It was interesting though because now we have, you're right, it's venues. So, we have Century Center, we have Palais. The new boss said, "Okay, I'd like to go around the table and say what... how has the last two years affected you?"

0:50:51 [GG] And by the new boss you're talking about Aaron Perri, Director.

[PM] Right. So, they go around the table, and I'm sitting here listening to all of them talking and I'm thinking, "They don't get it." [laughs] What I'm saying is, they were saying little things and all that. I said, we have \$50 million for park bond. And I said, and a third of that money is coming from economic development. I said, I don't think you understand, for the people long before you, do you know how much we wanted economic development money? [laughs] All of the sudden... We've been saying that for 100-years!

0:51:28 So, what I don't think that all of you get is now, now it's quality and place. Now we want to make it big. Now it's economic development. It's where you live, and help the community, how important... From our standpoint, you know, we preached that our whole lives. But now to have the Council, to have the Mayor, to have the community all see the importance of parks, I mean, we felt like we've been screaming that our whole lives.

And now... I said, to say, what's changed? In my mind, I'd say this to them, "Are you crazy?"

[GG] Or maybe, "It took you long enough?"

[PM] Yeah!

0:52:05 But, for them, a lot of them are brand-new. To them... So they kind of like accept that, like, oh no, of course we're economic. No, no we're not! But I think sometimes to appreciate where you are now, you have to know where you came from.

[GG] That is my whole career.

[laughs]

[PM] So you would agree with that!

[GG] I would agree with that.

0:52:30 I don't have any other formal questions. If there's anything that I didn't ask, or anything that you feel is important to share about this place, this space, please do.

[BH] You look at down on the East Race, and you look at the cars that are there on a Sunday, Saturday—fifty percent of them are from out of town. That brings economics to the city. People find out about it they come here, “Man, this is really neat.” They try to get it put into their town, but money-wise, they can’t build it.

0:53:03 [PM] And you know now, like you mentioned, since now we’re combined, in our town the Morris—obviously that brings people. The Cubs stadium, Century Center. Now, granted, those are... And the East Race that Mr. Goodrich dumped on my... didn’t care if I slept for the next two years.

Think about it, we’re now—those are the four main things that are downtown. And for the Parks... and for Venues, Parks, and Arts, we’re involved in all four of those. And there’s no doubt you keep seeing downtown improving and getting better. There’s no doubt... a quarter of a billion probably now and it’s gonna keep going. We all know what happened to Studebaker—well now, this is like, this is the renovation part of it. And from my old perspective, it’s neat that parks are a big part of it now.

0:53:57 [GG] Gentlemen, thank you. If you have any more please do. I didn’t mean to interrupt.

[BG] No, it’s been enjoyable. I reminisced a little bit...

[Audio ends.]